The NIRB was established in May 1968 to advise the Director of Central Intelligence regarding the relative value to the national intelligence effort of the various U.S. intelligence activities. This advice is intended to assist the Director arriving at recommendations regarding the most effective allocation of national intelligence resources.

The roles of the NIRB and the Director of Central Intelligence are advisory with respect to Department of Defense intelligence resource decisions. They do not have authority to make Department of Defense intelligence resource decisions.